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# United States Mission to the United Nations Exit Memo

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## Introduction

When President Obama took office in 2009, he believed that the United States would be stronger and more secure if we embraced international law, worked constructively with the United Nations (including in the pursuit of UN reform), built global coalitions in order to share burdens and more effectively counter transnational threats, and invested political capital in the pursuit of diplomatic solutions. He recognized the flaws of the UN system – there are more undemocratic countries in the world than democracies; Russia and China have used their veto to block meaningful UN Security Council action on key issues; the machinery is bloated and not as efficient as would most benefit the world’s vulnerable; and many countries are not prepared to do their fair share in promoting peace and security. But the President also saw that, in a world of transnational challenges, it was not possible to advance America’s interests without leading the world by example, and leading the charge for strong action to tackle transnational threats from within the United Nations.

The United Nations has an important deliberative and rule-making function, including the 15-country UN Security Council, which can authorize a range of measures to maintain international peace and security, such as the use of force, financial sanctions, and arms embargoes; the 47-country UN Human Rights Council, which can establish international commissions or rapporteurs to investigate human rights violations; and the 193-country UN General Assembly, which approves the UN budget and can help set international norms. The UN system, with its annual budget of more than \$40 billion, also comprises a set of capabilities. The UN has 100,000 troops and police deployed in 16 peacekeeping operations to protect civilians or help countries transition from conflict to peace. It has 4,000 personnel in nearly a dozen special political missions, from Afghanistan to Somalia, and more broadly working to try to help mediate and resolve conflicts. It has thousands of staff, in a dozen different entities and agencies, working to deliver humanitarian aid to the 95 million people in need, to monitor sanctions compliance, to inspect nuclear facilities for evidence of weaponization, and to track cross-border drug trafficking – to name just a few of the tasks UN personnel perform around the world.

When the United States leads at the United Nations, we shape the rules and norms – and we can leverage UN capabilities in service of international security, making the United States safer and stronger, while sparing us financial and operational burdens that are unsustainable for the United States. Over the last eight years, we have re-engaged the United Nations, and we have led the world. President Obama restored the position of U.S. Ambassador to the UN as a member of the Cabinet. We paid our bills and cleared hundreds of millions of dollars of UN arrears. We used the UN as a forum to tackle the salient issues of our time, including the UN Security Council summit President Obama chaired on nuclear non-proliferation in 2009; to the 2014 UN Security Council summit he convened to mobilize more robust action on the growing threat of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs); the successive summits that the Vice President and the President hosted in 2014 and 2015 to generate new military and police contributions in international peacekeeping; to the President’s 2016 refugee summit of almost 50 countries, which mobilized significant new resources to support the displaced.

In re-engaging the United Nations, we have not compromised our national interests, but advanced them; we have not overlooked the dysfunctions of the UN system, but sought to tackle them; and we have not muted our values, but defended them vigorously and credibly.

# We Have Leveraged the UN to Address Global Crises

Over the last eight years, we worked through the United Nations not out of instinct or ideology, but because it was in our national security interest to do so.

## **Addressing Security Threats**

In 2010, following the release of information showing that Iran had been building a covert enrichment facility, the United States mobilized the UN Security Council to impose unprecedented sanctions on Iran for its continued efforts to develop a nuclear weapons program. Security Council Resolution 1929 restricted Iran's nuclear activities, ballistic missile program, and ability to acquire certain heavy weapons, and it also put in place a framework to crack down on Iran's use of banks and financial transactions to fund proliferation. This resolution helped motivate the European Union and other like-minded partners to join the United States in adopting even tougher measures targeting Iran's oil, banking, and transportation sectors. The results were significant. These sanctions cost Iran more than \$160 billion in oil revenue alone, creating such pressure on Tehran that they were willing to pursue negotiations that ultimately resulted in the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which cut off all of Iran's pathways to a nuclear weapon and instituted the most rigorous and intrusive inspections regime ever applied to a nuclear program. The UN Security Council endorsed this deal in Security Council Resolution 2231, while retaining some restrictions on Iran's ballistic missile and conventional arms and also providing for the snapback of UN sanctions if Iran fails to fulfill its commitment under the JCPOA. We must remain extremely vigilant to ensure proper implementation, but having the deal in place is an important step to blocking Iran's development of nuclear weapons.

We have turned frequently to the UN to address the nuclear threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), increasing the costs to the Pyongyang regime for its proliferation and its rejection of the diplomatic process. Because the United States does not trade with the DPRK, UN Security Council sanctions are critical as they bind all the nations of the world, including China and others with ties with the DPRK. When the DPRK announced its second-ever nuclear test in 2009, we won UN Security Council adoption of Resolution 1874, which imposed asset freezes, a new cargo inspection framework, financial sanctions, and a broad arms embargo. When the DPRK conducted its third-ever nuclear test in 2013, we broadened the scope of UN sanctions by increasing pressure on the DPRK's maritime, aviation, diplomatic, and financial activities. As DPRK carried out two further nuclear tests and two dozen ballistic missile launches in 2016, we worked closely with China to lead the UN Security Council to adopt two more ground-breaking resolutions to impose on the DPRK the strongest sanctions on any country in a generation, including severe restrictions on hard-currency generating exports of key DPRK exports like coal, iron, gold, and rare earth materials; a mandatory inspection regime to prevent the flow of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-related material; and banking prohibitions.

Even as we responded to DPRK nuclear and ballistic missile threats, we also brought new focus on the DPRK's brutal treatment of its own people. In 2013, the United States spearheaded at the UN Human Rights Council the creation of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK, which found a human rights situation that "does not have any parallel in the contemporary world." At the UN Security Council, the United States mobilized the votes needed to put DPRK human rights violations on the Council agenda for the first time, convening three times since 2014 to draw attention to the DPRK

regime's atrocities, including how it is literally working people to death in coal mines to generate revenue for its nuclear weapons program. We have also used these sessions to marshal long-overdue pressure on UN member states to stop the widespread practice of repatriating desperate North Koreans who have managed to escape the horrors of the regime. By raising awareness of the DPRK government's abusive human rights practices and simultaneously adopting global sanctions that pose long-term consequences for the North Korean regime, we are ratcheting up the pressure on its senior leadership to rethink its calculus and return to credible negotiations on denuclearization, while also blocking its access to the knowhow, resources, and technology it has been using to fuel its nuclear and ballistic missile program.

We have also leveraged the UN's uniquely broad membership to unify international efforts against terrorists by targeting their financial resources, stopping the flow of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), providing humanitarian assistance, and carrying out military action aimed at denying terrorist organizations territorial strongholds. This is particularly significant because the UN Security Council is the only institution in the world with the power to require all UN Member States to sanction terrorists and adopt relevant notional laws. To limit financing for terrorists, we have worked in the UN Security Council to sanction approximately 150 individuals and entities associated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Qaida since 2008. In addition, we used the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution in February 2015 that sought to reduce oil revenue for ISIL and al-Qaida in Syria by threatening to impose sanctions on individuals who engage in trade with these groups. We then helped to convene finance ministers for the first time in the UN Security Council in December 2015 so as to combat more effectively the full range of means by which terrorists secure financing. We strengthened the UN framework to implement Resolution 1540 in order to help keep WMD's out of the hands of terrorists and other non-state actors. And to improve coordination and establish certain shared standards to prevent the movement of foreign terrorist fighters, President Obama chaired a UN Security Council summit on this issue, which adopted a resolution requiring countries to prevent suspected FTFs from entering or transiting their territories, to implement domestic legislation to prosecute FTFs, and to share information on criminal investigations and prosecutions of FTFs. In addition, the UN has played an important role in providing assistance to those affected by terrorism, particularly through humanitarian aid. Today in Mosul, Iraq, for example, the UN is playing a critical role alongside the counter-ISIL military campaign by responding to humanitarian needs inside the city while prepositioning supplies and staff in an effort to provide emergency assistance for up to 700,000 people who could be displaced. As the U.S. military has long recognized, significant humanitarian action will remain essential to the overall counter-ISIL strategy, as aggrieved and desperate populations can be more susceptible to radicalization. Since the struggle against violent extremism requires an upstream, proactive approach that grapples with issues of governance, local grievance, and human rights, we also strongly supported the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and the "all of UN" approach it lays out.

## Syria

The war in Syria has been a conflict of epic proportions, resulting in some 400,000 deaths and the displacement of roughly one in every two Syrian citizens. Russia – initially a backer of the Syria regime and, since 2015, a party to the conflict – has vetoed six UN Security Council resolutions that could have mitigated the violence – showing the vulnerability of the international system to Russian aggression. Russia's cynical obstructionism has prevented the UN Security Council from enforcing international peace and security and from protecting the Syrian people – an abject failure. And yet even amid this Russian intransigence, the United States has succeeded in leveraging the Security Council to address chemical weapons use. Following the 2013 sarin attack on Ghouta by the Syrian regime that killed more

than one thousand people (including many children), and the credible threat of force by the United States, we and Russia secured the dismantling of the Syrian government's chemical weapons program, working through the Security Council, the Organization for the Prohibition on Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and a broad range of partner countries in a sophisticated effort to remove from an active war zone Syria's declared stockpile of more than 1,200 metric tons of deadly chemical weapons. When the Assad regime then started launching chlorine attacks, we returned to the UN Security Council to spearhead the creation of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) to ascertain responsibility for chemical weapons attacks, thereby denying the Syrian government and its allies the ability to cover up their heinous actions. To date, the JIM has officially concluded that the Syrian regime was responsible for three chemical weapons attacks involving chlorine gas, and ISIL was responsible for one attack in Syria using the blister agent sulfur mustard. In November 2016, the UN Security Council reauthorized the JIM to continue its work in 2017, and the United States and our partners will continue to use these findings to hold accountable those responsible for chemical weapons use in Syria.

The UN has also worked doggedly in the most difficult and dangerous circumstances – and in the face of the Syrian regime's systematic obstruction of humanitarian assistance – to provide humanitarian aid to people across Syria, in both regime and opposition-controlled areas. The United States helped lead the UN Security Council to authorize UN agencies in July 2014 to deliver relief across borders (through Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq) without explicit approval from the Syrian regime. This has allowed the UN to deliver medical supplies for 9 million treatments, food for 3 million people, and water, sanitation, and hygiene supplies for 2.5 million people to populations in six governorates. UN agencies such as the World Health Organization and UN Children's Fund were also critical to quelling a 2013 resurgence of polio in Syria after a 14-year absence of the disease in the region.

### **Preventing and Mitigating Conflict**

We have turned to the UN as a complement to our bilateral efforts to help prevent violence and encourage peaceful political transition. For example, in 2011, when former Cote d'Ivoire President Laurent Gbagbo sought to hold on to power after losing an election to Alassane Ouattara and threatened violence, we authorized tough UN sanctions and successfully urged the UN peacekeepers in the country to protect civilians, allowing the rightfully-elected president to take office and setting the stage for peaceful elections four years later. And when Libyan President Muammar el-Qaddafi began a brutal crackdown and threatened to "cleanse Libya house by house" of those who had dared to protest against his brutal rule, we worked through the UN Security Council to authorize the use of force to protect civilians; impose financial sanctions, travel bans, and an arms embargo; and refer the atrocities to the International Criminal Court. In the years since, we have worked with the UN and supported its efforts to bring peace and stability to Libya. While the situation in Libya is not stable today, it is difficult to imagine that a large-scale massacre of civilians in Benghazi – as Qaddafi threatened – would have helped to tamp down the fierce regional, tribal, and religious tensions exposed and unleashed by the revolution against dictatorial rule, any more than Assad's crackdown has stabilized Syria.

In South Sudan, we worked through the United Nations to help its people achieve their longstanding dream of independence from Sudan in 2011, and to prevent a full-scale war between Sudan and South Sudan. U.S. leadership also has been critical to UN efforts since 2013 to try to stem the country's internal conflict, which has taken a devastating toll on civilians over the past three years. For example, we worked with other members of the UN Security Council to strengthen the UN peacekeeping mission in the country (UNMISS), first in late 2013 and then again in the fall of 2016, by authorizing an increase in the number of troops on the ground and expanding the Mission's mandate to add a regional protection force

that, when deployed, should more aggressively patrol and protect civilians. We have also relied on the United Nations to consolidate peaceful transitions in Sierra Leone and Liberia – countries that had been wracked with violence but where UN peacekeeping missions have brought hope to a region long plagued by violent turmoil.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), the UN warned in November 2013 that the “seeds of a pre-genocidal event” had been sewn, and the following month, more than 1,000 people were killed during just two days of violence between Christians and Muslims in the country’s capital, Bangui. In the next two months, half a million people were forced from their homes and 2.5 million people found themselves in desperate need of protection. Exhibitionist beheadings, machete-mob violence against civilians, and the wholesale “cleansing” of Muslims from their homes became commonplace. After initially working with African Union and European Union forces, including by airlifting African forces into CAR, we helped mobilize support in the UN Security Council for a peacekeeping mission of almost 12,000-troops and police tasked to restore order, protect civilians, and support a peaceful transition. While the country remains highly fragile, with a new spate of attacks on civilians in recent weeks, I have seen first-hand tentative progress in my four visits there – initially in December 2013 at the height of the crisis and most recently for the inauguration of the peacefully and democratically-elected President Faustin Touadera. It is clear that the presence of UN peacekeepers has thus far helped to avert a full-blown, ethno-religious civil war, which would have resulted in tens of thousands of civilian deaths, destabilized neighboring countries that are vital in the fight against Boko Haram/ISIL-West Africa, and potentially created the sort of ungoverned territory that could provide safe haven to other extremist groups.

With strong U.S. support, the UN has also been a key actor in ongoing mediation efforts to end longstanding conflicts. Through the UN Security Council, we have supported the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on Cyprus in his efforts to facilitate a comprehensive agreement on reunification of the island, and also maintained a UN peacekeeping force that has been a stabilizing presence and that will assist with implementation of an eventual settlement. In Colombia, where the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) negotiated the end to a decades-long conflict, we worked with partners to establish a UN special political mission, composed of unarmed observers from the UN, FARC, and Colombian government, to monitor and verify a bilateral ceasefire, as well as to oversee the disarmament process for the FARC. The parties began the process of implementing the terms of the Final Peace Accord on December 1, bringing them closer to ending the longest-running conflict in the Western Hemisphere.

Finally, on Ukraine, while the Russian veto in the Security Council limited our scope for action there, we have convened 30 sessions, using the Council as a high-profile stage on which to highlight the wide international condemnation of Russia for its aggression. Our action at the UN complemented our economic sanctions by highlighting Moscow’s diplomatic isolation and increasing the costs for its occupation of Crimea; its cover-up for Russian separatists’ shoot-down of the passenger jet MH17, which killed 298 people; and its further military takeover of parts of eastern Ukraine. In the UN General Assembly, notwithstanding huge Russian pressure, we were able to mobilize 100 votes rejecting Russia’s sham referendum on Crimea, thereby ensuring that UN maps (rightfully depicting Crimea as part of Ukraine) remain unchanged.

## Global Health, Climate, Development, and Refugees

The convening power and bully pulpit of the UN has also been effective in responding to global health crises. In the face of the 2014 Ebola outbreak, the United States convened the first-ever emergency UN Security Council session on a public health crisis, inviting a Liberian health worker to brief a stunned UN Security Council about having to turn away (owing to medical shortages) desperate parents carrying their Ebola infected children. He warned chillingly that if “the international community does not stand up, we will be wiped out.” After the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) affirmed this warning and estimated up to 1.4 million Ebola infections in Liberia and Sierra Leone within four months absent international intervention, we worked to establish a novel UN mission to support the eradication push. Knowing we needed to address the crisis at its source to keep it from spreading, I travelled to the three affected countries at the height of the epidemic to try to identify the needs on the ground and help reduce fears gripping the United States. Ebola’s human toll was staggering, having killed more than 11,000 people in the most acutely impacted countries in West Africa, but it could have been far worse without U.S. and UN involvement.

We have worked closely with the UN to address the urgent threat of climate change. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Climate Summit in 2014 set the stage for bold climate pronouncements, including the joint U.S.-China public commitment later that year to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These efforts created critical momentum for more than 190 countries to eventually come together to adopt the most ambitious collective climate change action plan in history with the December 2015 Paris Agreement. For the first time, the international community agreed that all parties will prepare, communicate, and maintain successive and ambitious nationally determined climate targets. And in the year since the Agreement was announced, UN and U.S. leadership – especially in concerted personal outreach from Secretary-General Ban and senior Obama Administration officials to wavering countries – was essential to paving the way for the Agreement’s unprecedented speedy entry into force on November 4, 2016.

With our support, the UN spurred the international community to develop a common vision for global development for the next 15 years, providing an essential forum to set ambitious targets, pool resources and expertise, and bring into the fold a wide array of new non-government partners. This effort culminated in consensus support for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, which sets out concrete priorities and milestones over 15 years – such as eradicating extreme poverty through increased market access, economic growth, and social protection programs.

Finally, the UN has been at the forefront of handling the greatest crisis of mass displacement since World War II, with more than 20 million refugees worldwide. I have travelled as often as possible to countries sheltering refugees in order to highlight the plight of the displaced and the efforts being made to support them. This included trips to Turkey, Jordan, Germany, France, and even Buffalo, New York to profile the plight of Syrian refugees; visits to Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria to shine a spotlight on the displacement caused by the terror inflicted by Boko Haram/ISIL-West Africa; and extensive meetings in the United States and in South Korea with individuals who fled the horrors of North Korea. President Obama convened a summit in September 2016 with almost 50 world leaders to shore up support for a UN refugee architecture under acute strain. Leaders pledged to increase financial contributions by approximately \$4.5 billion over 2015 levels; double the number of refugees they resettle (or afford other legal channels of admission); and create improved access to education for one million refugee children and improved access to lawful work for one million refugees. A follow-up minister-level meeting this year will ensure that countries are following through on their commitments, and sustain momentum on

addressing this crisis. We also launched a “call to action” for the private sector, which in a matter of weeks led to more than 50 companies committing to invest, donate, or raise more than \$650 million to aid refugees and underscored that the private sector is an integral partner in addressing this crisis.

## We Have Worked to Reform and Improve the UN

During President Obama’s time in office, we have worked to fix many of the shortcomings of the United Nations – from bloated budgets and bureaucratic red-tape to gridlock among member states on matters of huge consequence. Of course, the UN deliberative bodies reflect the prejudices of the member states within them, leading too many countries to privilege national sovereignty over the plight of vulnerable civilians – manifested most appallingly in the case of Syria – or to pursue ideological fixations – such as scapegoating Israel – instead of developing constructive solutions to the problems within their own borders. However, as President Obama underscored in his first address to the UN General Assembly, “imperfections are not a reason to walk away from this institution – they are a calling to redouble our efforts.”

### **Reforming the Way the UN Does Business**

We have worked tirelessly to strengthen and reform UN capabilities precisely because we can leverage UN capabilities to make the United States safer and more secure without having to go it alone. We have successfully pressed for greater accountability and transparency by beefing up the UN “watchdog” office (the Office of Internal Oversight Services), ensuring that the UN system publicly discloses internal audit reports, and reforming procurement procedures to allow for fair and competitive processes. We have also imposed greater budget discipline and efficiency, holding the U.S. share of the UN regular budget constant, securing nominal no-growth spending for the period 2013-2017 (after decades of increases in the regular budget), pushing through a new compensation package for UN professional staff that will save almost \$500 million over the next five years, and promoting the “Global Field Support Strategy,” which consolidated support for peacekeeping operations and political missions and has delivered \$250 million in savings to date.

Because transnational cooperation on terrorism necessitates expert discussions among domestic actors from different countries, we have broken with the longstanding UN practice of having only diplomats convening at the UN on security matters. We secured the first-ever meeting of UN Security Council members’ interior ministers, including our Secretary of Homeland Security, in May 2015 to discuss how to address the unique threats posed by foreign terrorists fighters returning to their home countries; we convened the first-ever UN Security Council gathering of finance ministers to discuss combating terrorist financing in December 2015; and, most recently, we brought our Secretary of Homeland Security back to the UN Security Council in September 2016 to participate in a meeting focused on threats to aviation security.

### **Addressing Anti-Israel Bias**

One of the persistent weaknesses across the UN system has been the biased and unfair approach to issues that relate to Israel. From the Security Council and General Assembly in New York, to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, we have sought to counter this prejudice, while also working to counter Israel’s too-frequent isolation. At the Security Council, we have rallied coalitions to vote against biased draft resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and also galvanized countries to support Council

statements condemning attacks on Israelis and Israeli diplomatic missions. We have also spearheaded successful campaigns to secure for Israel full and equal participation across UN bodies, from its participation in influential UN regional groupings that frequently act as voting blocs such as the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), where in 2013 we helped secure Israel's long overdue membership in Geneva; and the Japan, United States, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and New Zealand (JUSCANZ) group, which Israel was finally able to join in New York in 2014; to the UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which Israel joined in 2015. And in 2016, we secured the historic recognition of Yom Kippur as an official UN holiday, as well as the election of the Israeli Ambassador to the UN as the Chair of the powerful UN Sixth Committee (the Legal Committee), which marked the first time an Israeli official has been elected to head a permanent UN committee. We have also sounded the alarm about the surge in antisemitism as a growing human rights challenge around the world and sought to make the UN a venue that itself fights the scourge of antisemitism. In January 2015, we helped convene an unprecedented meeting of the UN General Assembly (the same venue that – in 1975 – passed a resolution equating Zionism with racism) in which over 50 countries spoke – including Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference – and expressed a nearly-uniform view that the international community must do more to address antisemitism as a growing threat to human rights and security.

### **Strengthening Peacekeeping**

One of the critical UN capabilities most in need of reform is UN peacekeeping, given its important role in stabilizing crisis situations from Mali to South Sudan to Lebanon. With the rest of the world providing more than 70 percent of the peacekeeping budget and more than 99 percent of the troops and police, UN peacekeeping is a critical burden-sharing arrangement, but historically it has faced a number of challenges, including slow deployment, equipment shortfalls, ineffective troops, and shocking instances of sexual exploitation and abuse. Over the last eight years, under President Obama's leadership, we have invested heavily in addressing these and other shortcomings to strengthen UN peacekeeping through concerted action and new policy, including a Presidential Memorandum on U.S. Support to UN Peace Operations.

Through successive peacekeeping summits convened by President Obama and Vice President Biden in 2015 and 2014, respectively, we have helped mobilize unprecedented new military commitments for UN peacekeeping of over 50,000 new troops and police from more than 60 countries. With record numbers of peacekeepers deployed, this initiative has provided the UN with a surplus of quality forces from which it can draw, including from advanced militaries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and Canada returning to peacekeeping for the first time in decades. They bring much-needed niche capabilities like medical units, engineering companies, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance teams that can make UN peacekeeping more effective against modern threats. No longer consigned merely to take whatever troops were available, the UN now can repatriate underperforming units, be more selective in choosing new units for future missions, create incentives for troop-contributing countries to improve their performance, and hold accountable bad actors in their ranks.

We also have worked to strengthen the norm that peacekeepers have a responsibility to protect civilians from violence, ensuring not only that troops have clearly stipulated mandates, but also that their capitals provide the political backing needed to these difficult but essential responsibilities. We have worked to secure endorsement by 39 countries (covering almost half of UN peacekeepers) for the Kigali Principles, which set out best practices for protection of civilians in peacekeeping, including the notion that peacekeepers must use military force when civilian lives are at stake. That means that, when the UN

selects units for peacekeeping operations with civilian protection mandates, it can prioritize peacekeepers from countries that have endorsed the Principles, and the United States can do the same in choosing partners to train and equip bilaterally. Additionally, through the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership (APRRP) announced in 2014, the United States committed up to \$550 million to partner with six African countries to enhance their national capacities to rapidly deploy high-quality peacekeeping forces to quickly address emerging crises on the African continent.

At the same time, we have worked to address the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) committed by UN peacekeepers, focusing on efforts to ensure that troop-contributing countries hold their personnel accountable for any incidents of SEA. We successfully pressed the UN to start publishing key information on all SEA allegations – including the nationality of the alleged perpetrator and the status of investigation by their home country – creating reputational incentives for countries to investigate allegations. We led a UN General Assembly effort to prevent payments to peacekeepers repatriated for SEA, diverting these payments instead to a fund to assist victims. And with our leadership, the UN Security Council adopted in 2016 the first-ever resolution on SEA, which endorsed Secretary-General Ban’s decision to repatriate peacekeeping units that carried out widespread or systemic SEA, and called on the UN to repatriate a country’s entire contingent in a given mission if that country fails to investigate personnel, ensure accountability proceedings, or report back to the UN on their disposition.

## We Have Advocated for Our Values at the UN

Among the 193 countries that comprise the UN, fewer than half are characterized by Freedom House as free, and the trend-lines have not been positive over the last decade. Since 2012, more than 140 laws restricting freedom of association or assembly have been enacted or proposed in more than 65 countries. Unsurprisingly, then, promoting human rights and democracy at the UN can meet stiff opposition. However, this only underscores the importance of speaking up persistently in defense of our values at the UN.

### **UN Human Rights Council**

In 2009, we joined the UN Human Rights Council – the primary body in the UN system responsible for promoting human rights and addressing human rights violations – notwithstanding its disproportionate focus on Israel or the fact that a number of its members are better known for abusing human rights than protecting them. We believe that we are more effective in championing open societies, political and civil freedoms, and norms of moderation and tolerance by harnessing the UN system to defend human rights, and we have amassed a significant track record of using the Council to advance our values and interests. Through our active leadership, we have helped to authorize international commissions or rapporteurs empowered to investigate, expose, and address the human rights situation in some of the world’s most abusive countries, including Iran, Syria, North Korea, Sudan, and Russian-occupied Crimea. We thwarted efforts by Iran in 2010 and Syria in 2011 to join the UN Human Rights Council; and we spearheaded the unprecedented decision to suspend Qaddhafi’s Libya from the UN Human Rights Council in 2011. In response to Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa’s atrocities against Tamil civilians, the United States led the UN Human Rights Council beginning in 2012 to adopt resolutions insisting on accountability for Rajapaksa’s abuses. This diplomatic isolation reportedly influenced some Sri Lankan voters, who in 2015 voted Rajapaksa out of office and elected Maithripala Sirisena, who has worked to enact a far reaching reform program. Although it is highly problematic that the UN Human Rights Council still includes only one permanent agenda item – not on North Korea or Syria, but rather

on Israel – through our leadership in the Council since 2009 we have succeeded in getting the body to expand its focus, reducing by half the share of country-specific resolutions on Israel.

### **Civil Society & Political Prisoners**

In New York, we have fought efforts by undemocratic countries to exclude non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the UN accreditation process. We worked to ensure that several NGOs wrongly deemed controversial – including a U.S.-based LGBT NGO, a U.S.-based political prisoners NGO, and an Israel-based emergency-services NGO – obtained UN accreditation. We also leveraged the UN’s convening power by helping launch President Obama’s Stand with Civil Society initiative, to support, defend, and sustain civil society amid a rising tide of restrictions on its operations globally, including a High-Level Event on Supporting Civil Society hosted by President Obama at the UN in 2013.

While discussions of human rights at the UN can often seem removed from real people, we have gone to great lengths to try to put a human face on those who are being persecuted around the world. When China hosted a high-level summit at the United Nations in September 2015 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Beijing conference on women’s rights, we were determined to call attention to the hypocrisy of certain governments that talk cheerfully about human rights at international conferences even while they imprison their citizens back home for exercising their rights. So we launched a global campaign to coincide with this summit, called #Freethe20, to highlight the cases of 20 women being unjustly held as political prisoners – and to call on the governments assembled in New York to “empower women, not imprison them.” Each day, we told one woman’s story – such as that of Leyla Yunus, a human rights activist in failing health, who had helped residents affected by forced evictions in Baku, Azerbaijan – through multi-media and hanging their photos on the window of the US Mission to the UN for visiting world leaders and the public to see. We engaged through diplomatic channels the governments holding these women prisoners; press outlets picked up the campaign; and Republican and Democratic Members of Congress amplified our calls. As of January 1, 2017, 14 of the 20 women – including Leyla Yunus – have been released and the issue of unjust imprisonment has taken on an elevated profile in UN corridors.

### **LGBT Rights**

We have championed at the UN the proposition that human rights should apply to all individuals regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. In 2010, we joined the UN LGBT Core Group in New York (a cross-regional group of UN member states and non-governmental organizations committed to advancing LGBT rights). When a UN committee voted in 2011 to eliminate any mention of LGBT individuals from a resolution that condemned the extrajudicial killing of vulnerable people around the world, we mustered the votes to restore the reference to sexual orientation. And when Moscow launched a concerted campaign in 2015 to overturn the UN Secretary-General’s courageous decision to grant benefits to the partners of UN employees regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, we defeated their efforts, securing the support of 80 percent of UN member states (and persuading dozens of countries to accept benefits for LGBT families at the UN even though such relationships are illegal in their home countries). In 2011, we secured passage of a landmark resolution at the UN Human Rights Council recognizing LGBT rights as human rights – and, in 2016, we created for the first time a mandate for an Independent Expert to monitor and report on the violence and discrimination faced by LGBT persons around the world.

We also co-sponsored in August 2015 the first-ever UN Security Council meeting on LGBT issues to discuss how ISIL systematically targeted LGBT persons in Iraq and Syria and heard the testimony of two gay men from the region who had been targeted and sought asylum in the United States. On June 13, 2016, after the horrific attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, we persuaded the UN Security Council to issue a strong condemnation of the incident, marking the first time the UN Security Council had used the term “sexual orientation” or otherwise acknowledged specific acts of violence targeting LGBT persons. And just a few days later, I hosted a diverse group of ambassadors and representatives from 16 countries at the historic Stonewall Inn, the place where the modern LGBT rights movement started in the United States, to discuss what additional steps could be taken to address LGBT rights at the United Nations and beyond.

### **Women’s Rights, Human Trafficking, and Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

We have stood up for women’s rights at the UN, supporting the creation of a dedicated UN Special Representative to tackle sexual violence in conflict; helping to establish UN Women, a new and more streamlined entity working in support of women; and repealed the “global gag rule,” which prevented women from gaining access to essential information and healthcare services. We have also elevated the issue of human trafficking: in December 2015 we convened the first-ever UN Security Council session on this issue, which featured the harrowing testimony of Nadia Murad Basee Taha, a Yazidi woman who had been sexually enslaved by the Islamic State. And we have also stood up for the rights of the disabled. President Obama signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a treaty supported by veterans groups and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. If ratified by the U.S. Senate, the Convention would strengthen our ability to advocate for disability rights internationally and to secure for Americans with disabilities abroad the same rights they are afforded in the United States under U.S. law.

## **Strengthening and Working with the United Nations**

The United Nations can be a challenging place to mobilize action. With a total annual budget of more than \$40 billion across the UN system alone, there is still too much waste. With more than 40,000 professional staff around the world, some officials are poor performers. With 193 member states, it is easy to fixate on the perversity of Syria and North Korea being afforded the rights and privileges of membership.

The United States has a deep interest in continuing to demand that the United Nations – its staff and its member states – live up to the ideals expressed in the UN Charter of 1945. We must continue to demand more budget discipline, greater efficiency, more effectiveness, and far more emphasis on the tangible impact decisions and actions in this body have on real people. We should keep pressing the United Nations to be the best version of itself. But in 2017 it is clear that the United States needs the UN more than ever. It is also clear that it would harm U.S. interests – including our vital national security interests – to retreat from leading at the UN.

The international landscape is more volatile today than at any time in the last 25 years, and our own domestic challenges necessitate burden-sharing. We will be more effective in addressing an enormously complex set of challenges if we can bring to bear the UN’s capabilities, which complement our national assets. And it is unwise to believe that one can view the UN system simply as a menu from which one can choose a la carte items. While it is true that what matters most to another country may not be of great importance to the United States, it is also the case that what matters most to the United States may not

matter to other countries; yet if we are to deal effectively with transnational threats, we need all countries to do their part. The price of bringing the whole UN system to bear on behalf of our core interests is working within the organization in a systematic fashion and leading the cause of UN reform from our perch as the most influential country in the United Nations. The good news is that, despite the deep divide between the United States and Russia, we and the other members of the Security Council agreed last fall on an extremely qualified and capable new Secretary-General, António Guterres, to lead the United Nations for the next five years, so the United States should have a strong partner in championing UN reform.

There are many reasons why working to strengthen and lead the UN is in our interest:

- As ISIL and al-Qaida plot to do harm, we will need to leverage increasingly expansive and innovative UN sanctions that target not only individuals and entities, but also their key revenue streams, as we did with the 2015 adoption of the UN Security Council resolution on oil revenue; a global threat like terrorism necessitates a global response, and the United Nations is the only body that brings all of the countries of the world together;
- As North Korea marches forward in developing nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles, UN Security Council sanctions will remain critical in ratcheting up the pressure on the DPRK and seeking to persuade the regime that the only path to the economic development and international recognition is to return to negotiations on denuclearization;
- As Iran continues to implement its JCPOA commitments, we must continue to fulfill our own commitments and use UN Security Council Resolution 2231 to maintain legal restrictions on the transfer of nuclear-related items to ensure that Iran's nuclear program will remain exclusively peaceful and provide for the snapback of UN sanctions if Iran fails to adhere to the its commitments under the JCPOA;
- As Libya continues to endure violence, threatening to destabilize the region, we must work with the UN's special political mission to try to broker national political reconciliation, counter arms proliferation, and build governance capacity. Going it alone or with a small subset of countries will be greeted skeptically by some factions on the ground, whereas channeling our conflict resolution efforts through UN frameworks, while ensuring that they remain Libyan-led, can earn them greater buy-in and perceived legitimacy;
- As South Sudan teeters on the edge of full-scale ethno-civil war, which would result in mass civilian deaths and destabilize large swathes of Africa, we will rely on multiple UN-related strategies to deter mass atrocities. These include strengthening the UN peacekeeping mission in the country; pressing for the deployment of a UN regional protection force as a supplement to that mission; continuing to seek an arms embargo to staunch the flow of weapons into South Sudan and targeted sanctions against spoilers who seek to promote mass violence; and working with regional actors to energize a stalled political process and attempts at reconciliation;
- As the Syrian regime continues to kill its own people, destabilizing the Middle East and strengthening terrorist groups, we will need the UN to continue to work to attempt to broker a political solution, deliver critically needed humanitarian aid to the Syrian people where it can, and support efforts to reinforce the norm against chemical weapons use;

- As Russia continues to menace our allies and attempt to interfere in political systems in Europe and beyond, we will need to show broad condemnation of these actions in UN fora;
- As the government of Iraq conducts military operations against ISIL, we will need the UN to help provide humanitarian assistance to those displaced by the conflict, partnering with the government to help stabilize liberated communities, and build the capacity of local and state institutions to govern inclusively;
- As the government of Afghanistan struggles to maintain security, build an inclusive society, and deliver services to its people, we will need the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to support reconciliation efforts, monitor human rights, and deliver humanitarian assistance as a supplement to the efforts of the Afghan government;
- As Boko Haram/ISIL-West Africa unleashes terror in northern Nigeria, and creates widespread famine conditions, we will need the UN to deliver food and medicine to avert deaths of an estimated 800,000 people, and to help the Nigerian and regional governments implement effective governance and development strategies alongside their military campaigns;
- As armed groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo use atrocities and sexual violence to advance their political goals, we will need strengthened UN peacekeeping operations to intervene more proactively to protect vulnerable populations; and we will need the UN to use its good offices to advance the important transition of power agreement between the government and political opposition in 2017;
- As more than 20 million refugees overload the frontline countries providing them refuge, creating huge strains for some of our closest partners in the Middle East, Africa and Europe, we will need the UN to deliver assistance to the populations in need, help refugee-hosting countries design policies to accommodate refugees, relocate the most vulnerable to third countries, and counter violent extremism among young people who lack access to school or work;
- As Colombia begins implementing a hard-won peace after a conflict that killed thousands and created a haven for drug trafficking, we will rely on the UN to monitor and verify the demobilization and disarmament of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC); and
- As nations around the world face the urgent effects of climate change, we will need the UN to marshal political pressure to ensure that all countries take the steps necessary to meet the targets they have set for themselves under the Paris Agreement, and to help the most vulnerable build resilience to the destabilizing effects of climate change.

In facing these challenges – and many more – we will be stronger and more secure by leveraging the UN's capabilities. Other nations will follow us if we continue to lead; without our leadership the vacuum on the global stage will prove very harmful to U.S. interests. Indeed, in the years ahead, working with the UN to address these challenges will not be a litmus test of whether one is committed to international norms and institutions or not – it will simply be a strategic necessity.